

The Baytown Sun

Covering Southeast Harris County, Chambers County and Southeast Liberty County

70°
Clear



Advanced Search

GO

[Home](#) [Obituaries](#) [News](#) [Sports](#) [Opinion](#) [Services](#) [Entertainment](#) [Sun Edition](#) [Advertising](#) [Magazines](#) [Contact Us](#)

[Home](#) [News](#)

EPA: Dig Up San Jacinto Waste Pits

Story

Comments (1)

Print Font Size:

Superfund Site Solution



San Jacinto Waste Pits

The cleanup plan to address highly toxic dioxin contamination at the San Jacinto Waste Pits Superfund site in Harris County, Texas has been approved. The selected remedy will protect human health and the environment by removing highly contaminated material from the site and securing less contaminated areas. The plan provides certainty to people living near the site by permanently addressing risk posed by the contamination. It also provides certainty to other economic interests including the businesses that rely on the San Jacinto River for navigation and the Interstate-10 transportation corridor.

"Today, we are announcing our decision to ensure the San Jacinto site is cleaned up for the benefit of the entire community," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "As exemplified today, EPA is prioritizing Superfund clean-up by making decisions in a decisive, timely manner. The San Jacinto Waste Pits site was added to the National Priority List nearly a decade ago, and I am pleased to announce a decision has been made to permanently address the highly toxic materials to ensure health and safety in the surrounding communities."

EPA's cleanup plan includes installing engineering controls such as cofferdams before excavating almost 212,000 cubic yards of dioxin contaminated material for disposal. A small amount of material will stay on the site where controls will prevent access, eliminate off-site migration and monitor the natural recovery into the future. The estimated cost for the remedy is \$115 million and is cost-effective; representing a reasonable value for the cost incurred.

Posted: Thursday, October 12, 2017 12:00 am

By Christopher James

1 comment

After years of fighting for removal of the San Jacinto River Waste Pits, environmental activists and residents can breathe a little easier now knowing they are one step closer to getting the pits removed, as the Environmental Protection Agency approved just that Wednesday.

"Today, we are announcing our decision to ensure the San Jacinto site is cleaned up for the benefit of the entire community," said EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt. "As exemplified today, EPA is prioritizing Superfund cleanup by making decisions in a decisive, timely manner. The San Jacinto Waste Pits site was added to the National Priority List nearly a decade ago, and I am pleased to announce a decision has been made to permanently address the highly toxic materials to ensure health and safety in the surrounding communities."

The selected remedy is full removal, and will "protect human health and the environment by removing highly contaminated material from the site and securing less contaminated areas."

The EPA's cleanup plan includes installing engineering controls such as cofferdams before excavating almost 212,000 cubic yards of dioxin-contaminated material for disposal. A small amount of material will stay on the site, where controls will prevent access, eliminate off-site migration and monitor the natural recovery into the future. The estimated cost for the remedy is \$115 million.

"It's so surreal," said Jacquelyn Young of the Texas Health and Environmental Alliance. "I have countless community members, my father included, saying we're not going to live to see the end of this. And I couldn't help but get choked up making that phone call to my dad and making the first few calls to our residents letting them know this site that has plagued your neighborhood for so long is going to be taken care of. It's just incredible."

The EPA's final cleanup plan, called a Record of Decision, addresses comments on the proposed plan concerning the risk of water spreading dioxin

LIBERTY DAYTON
CHRYSLER DODGE JEEP

2017 Ram 1500 Quad
4x4 Big Horn

\$29,984⁰⁰

320 HIGHWAY 146 BYPASS, LIBERTY, TX

936-336-8841

www.libertydaytonchryslerdodgejeep.com

EVERYTHING
YOU NEED TO CULTIVATE
A HEALTHY
LIFESTYLE

Baytown
STRONG

Submit Your News!

contamination downstream by installing controls such as cofferdams to allow for dry excavation of the waste material.

The EPA's selected remedy will permanently address the highly toxic dioxin waste materials, meets the federal regulatory requirements of the National Contingency Plan for cleanup of hazardous sites, and is protective of public health and the environment, the agency said. EPA will release an Administrative Record, which consists of all documents used to support its selected remedy.

"The hard work by County Attorney Vince Ryan and his staff has been remarkable," said Jack Morman, Harris County Commissioner Precinct 2. "Jackie Young, Galveston Bay Foundation and other activists have been relentless in advocating for this solution and I'm thrilled the EPA made the right decision."

Over the years, elected officials have supported removal of the waste pits as leaks from the protective temporary cap were reported time and time again. More recently, EPA dive teams reported collecting samples after the flooding caused by Hurricane Harvey that showed that the protective cap over the waste pit site "had been damaged and the underlying waste material was exposed." The EPA found that one of its samples showed waste was exposed at a level 2,300 times recommended for cleanup.

"I want to thank EPA Administrator Pruitt for this decision," said County Attorney Ryan. "We appreciate that he visited the San Jacinto site personally and that he had EPA personnel checking it out to discover the dioxin exposure after the hurricane."

The Superfund site, which is a set of impoundments, was built in the mid-1960s for disposing solid and liquid pulp and paper mill wastes that are contaminated with cancer-causing dioxins and furans. In 2011, the impoundments were covered with an armored cap as a temporary way to contain the contaminants.

The EPA's decision, fully explained in the Record of Decision, is based on extensive studies of the contamination, human health risks, and environmental risks of this site.

In fact, in 2015, the Texas Department of State Health Services found a large number of cancer clusters in parts of eastern Harris County, including Highlands, which border the Superfund site.

The final cleanup plan also considers the ever-changing San Jacinto River—which encroaches on the site—and protecting important downstream resources including the Galveston Bay estuary.

"I thank the EPA for making the right decision to remove the toxic waste pits out of the San Jacinto River," said Rep. Gene Green. "Our communities in eastern Harris County have been fighting for over a decade to have the dioxin and other cancer-causing toxic waste fully removed and disposed of safely. We will be monitoring the remediation process closely and call on the EPA to move as quickly as feasibly possible before additional dioxin is exposed into the environment."

Last year the EPA proposed a plan to remove 202,000 cubic yards of contaminated material from the northern and southern impoundments.

This original proposal was to remove a majority of the existing cap along with 152,000 cubic yards of contaminated materials. The remedy for the northern site was estimated to take 19 months at a price of \$87 million.

As for the southern site, the EPA proposed removing 50,000 cubic yards of toxic materials, which would have cost \$9.9 million and take about seven months.

But with the EPA recently approving a more effective solution to the waste pits, changes in the construction method will effectively eliminate any potential for spreading contamination to downstream areas. The \$97 million proposed plan outlined wet excavation of material.

"Galveston Bay Foundation applauds the EPA's decision to require removal of the dioxin-laden wastes from the San Jacinto River Waste Pits Superfund Site at I-10 in Channelview," said Scott Jones with Galveston Bay Foundation. "It ends a lengthy period of debate on the future of the waste at the site and will result in final remediation and cleanup for the site."

"This is a welcome step forward," said Kara Cook-Schultz, TexPIRG Toxics Director. "It is great that the EPA is removing toxic chemicals to keep them from ever running free into the San Jacinto River. This is a strong signal that the EPA is willing to fix a deadly problem. But it's not the only site at risk. The next step is for EPA to remove toxic soil at other flood-prone sites in Texas and around the country."

• • • • •

McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corp. statement

Although many elected officials, residents and activists are praising the EPA's decision to remove toxic contaminants from the waste pits, McGinnes Industrial Maintenance Corp., a potentially responsible party, is concerned with the plan.

"We cannot support a plan for the site that provides less protection to all affected communities than the existing cap already has provided," MIMC said Wednesday. "We are deeply concerned that the decision announced today could



We're always interested in hearing about news in our community. Let us know what's going on!

[Submit news](#)

Stories

➤ [Killer sentenced to life without parole in death of Baytown woman](#)

➤ [Citizens fuming over Baytown annexation](#)

➤ [Pair of alleged local killers awaiting trial](#)

➤ [RESTORING ROSELAND: Repairs ongoing; park to reopen in month](#)

➤ [Henry David Adair](#)

[Photos](#)

[Videos](#)

Sun Weekly Survey

Is the country is heading in the right direction?

☐ Yes

☐ No

[Vote](#)

[View Results](#)



**Sign up for our
Email Lists**

News Updates

Would you like to receive our daily news? **Signup today!**

[Manage Your Lists](#)

result in a release to the San Jacinto River and downstream areas. We disagree with EPA's claim that the local or downstream areas can be protected during removal. We will review U.S. EPA's Record of Decision in its entirety."

Discuss

Print

Posted in **News** on *Thursday, October 12, 2017 12:00 am.*

Similar Stories

- Two more join Dist. 6 Baytown council race
- Baytown council to vote on oil tank farm permit conditions tonight
- Citizens rebuke Baytown plans to annex
- Goose Creek parents, teachers & students rail against school time changes
- BSO's 50th season opens on Sunday

Most Read

- Killer sentenced to life without parole in death of Baytown woman
- Citizens fuming over Baytown annexation
- Pair of alleged local killers awaiting trial
- RESTORING ROSELAND: Repairs ongoing; park to reopen in month
- Henry David Adair

3 Foods to Never Touch

Cut a bit of belly bloat each day, by avoiding these 3 foods.

Rules of Conduct

1

Keep it Clean.
Please avoid obscene, vulgar, lewd, racist or sexually-oriented language. PLEASE TURN OFF YOUR CAPS LOCK.

2

Don't Threaten.
Threats of harming another person will not be tolerated.

3

Be Truthful.
Don't knowingly lie about anyone or anything.

4

Be Nice.
No racism, sexism or any sort of -ism that is degrading to another person.

5

Be Proactive.
Use the 'Report' link on each comment to let us know of abusive posts.

6

Share with Us.
We'd love to hear eyewitness accounts, the history behind an article.

Watch this discussion

More...

Begin typing here...

Post Comment

scottkillerbob posted at 7 18 am on Thu, Oct 12, 2017.

Posts: 2


McGinnes Industrial. Are you serious? Time after time the cap has failed and released toxins into the water table. It should have been cleaned up years ago. The plan to leave it is just as reckless as removing it. Clean it up once and for all.

 Report

|  Link

| [Share on Facebook](#)

| [Share on Twitter](#)

[Print comments](#) 



Save on DIY Building Kits
up to 45% off Steel Buildings, Perfect for:
Garages, Workshops & More! **SAVE!**
 FUTURE BUILDINGS

Sections

- [Home](#)
- [News](#)
- [Sports](#)
- [Opinion](#)
- [Lifestyle](#)
- [Communities](#)
- [Obituaries](#)
- [Photos](#)
- [Videos](#)
- [Weather](#)

Services

- [About Us](#)
- [Place An Ad](#)
- [Home Delivery](#)
- [Subscription Services](#)
- [Submission Forms](#)
- [Site Index](#)
- [Add Search Toolbar](#)
- [Newsstand Locations](#)

Contact us

[The Baytown Sun](#)

Baytown Sun

Phone number: (281) 422-8302

E-mail:

customerservice@baytownsun.com

Address: 1301 Memorial Drive
Baytown, TX 77520

Search

[Search](#)

Search in:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> All | <input type="checkbox"/> Communities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> News | <input type="checkbox"/> Opinion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sports | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo Galleries |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Lifestyle | <input type="checkbox"/> Video |

© Copyright 2017, BaytownSun.com, Baytown, TX | [Terms of Use](#)

southern
newspapers